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Canada: Royal Canadian  
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MEMORANDUM

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OTTAWA

March 1930



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## Royal Canadian Mounted Police



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## MEMORANDUM ON THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, formerly the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, is the Force upon which the Dominion Government relies for the enforcement of Federal statutes; it also is available for the assistance of the Provincial Governments in the preservation of law and order, by arrangement between the Dominion and Provincial authorities.

### THE ROYAL NORTHWEST MOUNTED POLICE

The acquisition of the Western prairies by the newly formed Dominion brought to the attention of the Government of the day the problem created by their native population. The several Indian tribes at this time were powerful and prosperous, but were being demoralized by liquor-sellers who came from the Western States; and in addition a certain amount of tribal warfare took place, of a nature to discourage settlement by white people. To cope with this situation a constabulary, known as the Northwest Mounted Police, was formed in 1873 by the first Commissioner, Colonel (afterwards Major General Sir George) French. This Force, only 300 strong at the outset, in 1874 marched right across the Territories from the Red River to the Rocky Mountains, the entire march being upwards of 2,000 miles, and through country which in part was unknown; the Force so impressed the Indians that a series of Treaties was concluded, and the Government was enabled to assume control of the aboriginal inhabitants of the country. In the period from 1876 to 1881 brilliant service was rendered in controlling the Sioux Indians who had entered the Northwest Territories after the defeat of General Custer.

The prairie country underwent several phases of development very rapidly. When the Mounted Police entered it the Indians were powerful and prosperous after their fashion. A few years later the sudden disappearance of the buffalo reduced them to beggary, and it became necessary to provide them with the means of livelihood; had there been no strong and just authority in the land, the Indians would have been driven by starvation to warfare against the whites. A little later the building of the Canadian Pacific created a new difficulty in the appearance on the prairies of thousands of labourers, many of them rough men, trained elsewhere to dislike and fear of the Indians; here again the influence of the Mounted Police kept the peace between these dangerous elements. There succeeded the eras of the rancher and the farmer, and in later years large cities with their special problems have sprung up in what within the span of one man's life was open prairie; through the entire period, with the exception of the slight and short-lived Riel Rebellion of 1885, perfect order has prevailed. The principle throughout has been to provide for each development in advance. New-comers found on arrival a strong, efficient and incorruptible administration, and each community could address itself to material problems with no difficulties as to the preservation of order or the enforcement of the law. At the outset the Mounted Police constituted a considerable proportion of the administration of the settlements; as conditions developed local governments were erected and these assumed more and more of the task of administration, until the whole of the prairies south of the sixtieth parallel had their own Provincial Governments, which undertook the enforcement of the law as fully as those of Eastern Canada. The sudden opening of the Yukon afforded a conspicuous object lesson of this principle, and of the value of the Force, which preserved perfect order among adventurous miners and the floating population which haunts mining camps,

some of whom were inclined to turbulence, and over an enormous area in which travel was difficult and the conditions of life rigorous.

In addition to discharging police duties and undertaking much executive work—such as guarding against prairie fires in the early days, visiting lonely settlers in severe winters, etc.—the Force had their share of military duties. The original march across the prairies was a military task, performed in a military manner; they bore an active part in the fighting of the Riel Rebellion; they sent a considerable number of troops to the South African War, and in the Great War they furnished two squadrons for service overseas, one in France and one in Siberia.

When Alberta and Saskatchewan were constituted Provinces in 1905, an arrangement was made whereby the Force continued to discharge its former functions, each province making a contribution towards defraying its cost. This was continued until 1917, when, under the press of war conditions, the two provinces assumed control of the ordinary enforcement of law and order.\* The task of the Royal North West Mounted Police (the honourable prefix "Royal" came in 1905) then took the form of ordinary police work in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, and elsewhere of enforcing strictly federal statutes. The latter duty was assuming increasing proportions, the constant extension of Governmental activities and the growing complexity of social conditions making it clear that the Dominion Government needed an executive agency available in all provinces. In 1918 as a tentative measure the Royal Northwest Mounted Police were made responsible for the enforcement of Federal legislation in the whole of Western Canada, that is, west of Port Arthur and Fort William. This meant

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\*In 1928 Saskatchewan reverted to what in effect is the old arrangement. The Saskatchewan Provincial Police were disbanded and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police took charge of criminal work, etc., in the province, as before 1917.

extending the operations of the Force to British Columbia and to Manitoba and that part of Western Ontario between Manitoba and Lake Superior. Soon after this was effected the serious labour troubles associated with the General Strike of 1919 brought out the value of such an auxiliary of the law, the riot which marked the collapse of the strike in Winnipeg being suppressed by the Force with a minimum of bloodshed. Soon afterwards it was decided to establish one Federal Police Force for the whole of Canada, by amalgamating the Dominion Police with the Royal Northwest Mounted Police.

#### THE DOMINION POLICE

To the Dominion Police it now is necessary to give a glance.

For many years Canadian Governments have felt the need for a highly trained and disciplined constabulary under the orders of the central authorities. As long ago as during the administration of Lord Durham authority was taken by an Ordinance for the establishment of such a Force, and a few years later, in 1846, disorders among the navvies employed in enlarging the Welland and St. Lawrence Canals caused additional legislation to be passed, and a small Force of Mounted Police to be raised and kept up for a time; later still, in 1849, the Elgin riots in Montreal caused another such Force to be authorized and raised. A third occasion for the use of Governmental Police was afforded by the Fenian Raids, and the Force then employed was given permanent existence about 1868, as the Dominion Police, for the purpose of guarding the Government buildings at Ottawa. Small at first, numbering little over a dozen, this Force gradually increased until at the beginning of 1920 it numbered about 140 of all ranks; its duties, while principally confined to Ottawa, were extended to the guarding of the dockyards at Halifax and Esquimalt, and it developed anti-counterfeiting and fingerprint services which have proved of value.

During the great war the duties of the Dominion Police expanded. They had charge of the security service work of the Dominion outside of the provinces where the Royal Northwest Mounted Police operated, and the enforcement of the Military Service Act was entrusted to them for the whole of Canada, a special branch of the Force being formed for this purpose. In 1918, when the Royal Northwest Mounted Police were given the task of enforcing Federal Laws in Western Canada, it was arranged that the Dominion Police should be responsible for the same class of work east of Port Arthur. This arrangement proved temporary, the decision finally reached being to create a single Federal Constabulary.

#### THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Accordingly, on 1st February, 1920, the amalgamation took place. The Royal Northwest Mounted Police became the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and absorbed the Dominion Police, the uniformed members of the latter body constituting "A" Division of the combined Force. The headquarters, for many years at Regina, were moved to Ottawa. New districts have been established in Western Ontario, Eastern Ontario, Quebec and the Maritime Provinces, and detachments have been opened in places like Sault Ste. Marie, Sarnia, Windsor, Niagara Falls, Haileybury, Amos (in Northern Quebec), and Quebec City. This is not a complete list, as detachments are opened and closed as conditions change. The training depot still is at Regina, and most of the recruits who enlist are stationed there, the course of instruction usually lasting about six months.

There is much work to be done of a character which may not come generally into public notice. An example of what the Force is required to do is afforded by the energetic steps which have been taken to put down the traffic in narcotic drugs. From one end of the Dominion

to the other the operations of this pernicious underground commerce have been investigated, and a great number of offenders have been brought to justice—professional men and merchants as well as creatures of the underworld. Counterfeiting is another crime which gives a good deal of work.

#### THE CONTROL OF THE NORTH

While these new problems are being met, the Force is steadily pushing farther and farther into the wilder parts of the Dominion. In Northern British Columbia, for example, extensive patrols have been made in regions so remote that it has been necessary to punish Indians for murdering persons accused of witchcraft. The Mackenzie river is lined with detachments, from McMurray to Aklavik at the mouth; the Great Slave lake is ringed by detachments, and the Force is working into the Barren Lands. Further east, in and near Hudson Bay, there have been at various times detachments at Fullerton, Chesterfield Inlet, Baker lake, Churchill, Nelson, Moose Factory and Pelican Narrows, while others are being opened in Northern Saskatchewan. The coast of the Western Arctic Ocean is steadily patrolled from the Alaskan boundary to King William Island, close to the Magnetic Pole, and there are detachments at Herschel Island, Baillie Island, Bernard Harbour, and Cambridge Bay, the last-named post being on Victoria Island. In the Eastern Arctic all of the three great islands which form the western boundary of the lane of water west of Greenland—Davis Strait, Baffin Bay, Smith Sound, Kane Basin, Kennedy Channel, Robeson Channel—are patrolled and controlled from posts; these include Pangnirtung, Ponds Inlet and Lake Harbour in Baffin Island, Dundas Harbour in Devon Island, and Craig Harbour and Bache Peninsula in Ellesmere Island; the last-named is in 79°04' degrees north. In addition, there is a detachment at Port Burwell, on Hudson Strait.

The Eskimos now are being taught to obey the law, the process having been marked by the holding of several courts within the Arctic circle for the trial of capital and other charges. Throughout this wide waste of snow and ice, a few years ago known only by occasional visits of elaborately organized exploring expeditions, the Mounted Police constantly travel, upholding the law in Ultima Thule as well as along the International Boundary.

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